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GROWING UP INTELLECTUALLY:  
ISSUES FOR COLLEGE WOMEN

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Claire Zimmerman, Ph.D.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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ABSTRACT

Excerpts from interviews with college women are used to illustrate two modes of knowing, separate and connected. Separate knowing emphasizes objective criteria, critical examination of propositions and the construction of logical arguments. The orientation is toward impersonal rules and procedures. In connected knowing, on the other hand, one attempts to enter another person's frame of reference to discover the premises for the person's point of view. Connected knowers value first-hand experience and try to use their own experiences as a means of empathizing with the experiences of others.

Although college women become skilled in separate knowing and recognize its power, many also experience disillusion and anomie with it. Having learned all too well how to "extricate themselves" from their thinking, they find their intellectual work mechanical and unrelated to personal truth. These women also have difficulty becoming accomplished connected knowers. Although often predisposed toward understanding the other's point of view, they lack the sense of self that is needed as an instrument in connected knowing.

Some implications of these findings for college teaching are discussed.

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### Two Stories

In this paper we want to tell two stories about intellectual development in college. The first story is one William Perry (1970, 1981) tells. Perry's story grew out of longitudinal studies of intellectual and ethical development he and his associates conducted at Harvard in the 1960s and 1970s. We conducted a similar study between 1976 and 1982, interviewing a random sample of Wellesley College undergraduates each year during their stay at the college and in some cases after they left Wellesley. We have also interviewed some women students from other small liberal arts institutions. And the story we hear in our interviews with these women is very like the one Perry heard in his interviews with men. We hear another story, too.

To illustrate the first story, Perry's story, listen as a woman we call Naomi tells us how her views of art history have changed. The first time she talks about it she says,

There are certain questions that you have to answer for yourself, where there isn't just a right and wrong. Especially in a subjective course like art history. It's a matter of tastes. You can like a piece that someone else doesn't like, and you have to decide for yourself.

But Naomi finds that her professors do not want her simply to express her personal reactions to paintings in her papers. They want her to analyze the paintings, and they provide a five-page guide to aid her in doing the analysis.

They give us a way to analyze paintings. Then we analyze the painting and come to a conclusion. There are certain criteria that you base your evaluation on - the composition, texture, color, lighting. How the artist expresses his feelings. What the medium is.

At first, Naomi worries that teachers are trying to foist their opinions upon her, but she finds that this isn't so. Teachers are not trying to tell you what to think, she says. They're trying to teach you how to think. You can take any position you want, "so long as you substantiate what you're saying. They're teaching you a method, and you're applying it for yourself."

Another student makes the same discovery.

I think a teacher can get a paper with which he disagrees strongly but if it's well written and well argued, then he can't give that person a bad grade because he disagrees with it. (What makes a paper well written and well argued?)



Well, just the fact that the ideas are structured, that they're in logical sequence, that there aren't any contradictions between what you said in Paragraph 1 and what you say in Paragraph 4, you know. Um, that you thought about it well, that you considered all the possibilities and have looked at it from several angles and then maybe taken one point of view but made clear that you did consider other points of view.

Notice several things about this story. First, students learn to use objective criteria, rather than relying upon personal feelings. Second, they learn to consider events from more than one angle. Third, they learn to reason in order to please Authority. The student uses the teacher's methods to construct arguments which will meet the rigorous standards of powerful authorities.

The irony, as Perry points out, is that through conformity to Authority's desires, the student becomes capable of independent critical thinking. Although, at first, she exercises her new abilities only at Authority's behest, ultimately she uses them spontaneously to construct her own arguments and to examine other people's reasoning. She is no longer at the mercy of other people's arguments. Another student:

I never take anything I read or that someone says for granted. I just tend to see the contrary. I like playing devil's advocate, arguing the opposite of what somebody's saying, thinking of exceptions to what the person has said, or thinking of a different train of logic.

As Perry tells the tale, the student discovers that this kind of thinking is not just how "They" (the Authorities) want you to think. It is how they (the authorities, now dethroned to lower-case "a") think too. Having demonstrated at last that she can think as They do, the student is initiated into the community of scholars, confirmed as a thinker. She becomes one of them. This, of course, is true only if all goes well. And, of course, it doesn't always go well. (If it did, we might find more women among the tenured professorial ranks and in the board rooms of corporations. Most of Them are male.)

Although Perry's story does appear in our interviews, we also hear a different story, one which does not appear in his account. Often, the same Wellesley student tells both kinds of stories. Here is an alumna describing her "most powerful learning experience" at Wellesley.

I had lived in the same small town for eighteen years. Going to Wellesley - there was a real diversity of people there. You'd meet all kinds of people from all kinds of walks of life, from all across the country and the world, who have all kinds of different opinions and views on life. Just sitting around and talking with these people - I think that made me really start listening to people and comparing



and contrasting views on things... I'll always sit down and at least hear the other person out, regardless of how vehemently I disagree... If you listen to people and listen to what they have to say, maybe you can understand why they feel the way they do. There are reasons. They're not just being irrational.

An undergraduate says:

I think I'm a good empathizer in that if I were to sit down with a convicted criminal in his or her jail cell and have a discussion of this person's motives, who knows, maybe I would be able to see their point of view. I might not be able to agree. But I might be able to see that this person's background, or parents, or, or environment had been particularly, um, stressful and, and you know, I could understand that. And I would not feel superior. I don't think I could give you many examples of when I would feel morally above or separate from someone else to the extent that I wouldn't make the attempt to understand.

A third student describes how she studies a philosophy essay:

I try to think as the author does... it's hard but I try not to bias the train of thought with my own impressions. I try to just pretend that I'm the author. I try to really just put myself in the person's place and feel why is it that they believe this way.

These students are learning a new mode of thinking by trying to understand other people's views, views which may seem at first obscure or alien. They are trying to enter the other person's frame of reference to discover the premises for the other person's point of view. The "other" may be a teacher but is more likely to be a peer and may be a long-dead poet.

#### Separate and Connected Knowing

Picture two kinds of students studying a poem. Students who tell the first kind of story, the Perry story, ask themselves: "What standards are being used to evaluate my analysis of this poem? What techniques can I use to analyze it?" The orientation is toward impersonal rules and procedures. Borrowing a term from Carol Gilligan (1982) and Nona Lyons (1983), we shall call this type of knowing "separate." A student who tells the second story asks, instead, "What is this poet trying to say to me?" The object she is trying to understand is a poem, not a person, but she approaches it as if she were listening to a real person. We shall call this orientation "connected" knowing.

Gilligan and Lyons use the terms "separate" and "connected" to describe two different conceptions or experiences of the self, as essentially autonomous (separate from others), or as essentially in relationship (connected to others). The separate self experiences relationships in terms of "reciprocity," considering others as one would wish to be considered one's self. The connected self experiences relationships as "response to others in their terms"



(Lyons, 1983, p. 134). Our own use of the terms, as will become clear, is similar enough to warrant our borrowing them, but when we speak of separate and connected knowing we refer not to any sort of relationship between the self and another person but to relationships between knowers and the objects (or subjects) of knowing (which may or may not be persons).

In this paper we will speak of separate knowers and connected knowers as if they appeared as two distinct groups in our sample, but please remember that this is not so. Most of the students we have interviewed use both modes of knowing and some have moved toward integrating the two. But it is also true that at some points in their development, and perhaps forever, many of the students are tipped towards one mode or the other and, at that moment, may reasonably be labeled separate or connected knowers.

Although there are differences between these two intellectual modes, they share an important characteristic: they both involve conscious deliberate, systematic reasoning. Separate and connected knowers agree that truth is not immediately accessible. In order to know, they say, you must think. You must not take things at face value. You must not jump to conclusions. You must pay close attention to the object you are trying to analyze or understand, whether it is a person, a political issue, a scientific experiment or a poem.

One connected knower, for example, says she used to read her own assumptions into other people's actions, but she is learning to refrain. It's easy to get upset and "go into a rage" because you assume the other person deliberately did something to threaten you. But that may not be true. You must take the time to ask questions to "understand" how the other person looks at it rather than "just throwing your own image of yourself onto the other person." And another connected knower tells us that to understand a scholarly text you must treat it as you would treat a friend. You must "accept" it as "real," as "independent of your existence," rather than "using it for your own convenience or reinforcement."

Of the many writers who have helped us to conceptualize the distinction between separate and connected knowing, Peter Elbow (1973) has been one of the most useful. Elbow asks you to imagine that you are looking for the truth: you have a pile of conflicting assertions about some matter and you want to know which are true. There are two basic games you can use - the doubting game and the believing game.

Separate knowers play the doubting game. In playing the doubting game, we put each possible "truth" in the form of a logical proposition, and then we try to find something wrong with it. We might look for contradiction or incoherence or lack of substance, or, if we are scientists, we might try to disprove the proposition by subjecting it to rigorous empirical test. We might pit two of the propositions against each other, and make them fight it out. If, after exhaustive scrutiny, we find nothing wrong with the proposition we conclude that it may be true - truer, at least, than the propositions containing flaws. The story Perry tells is partly about the development of skill in doubting.



Connected knowers play the believing game. They are careful not to doubt the assertion. In playing the believing game we take each assertion, one at a time, ignoring all others, and try as hard as we can to believe it. This is not a soft-headed game; it is just as rigorous as the doubting game. Believers do not simply pick out the assertion that is easiest to believe, most intuitively "right." They try hardest to believe those ideas that seem most bizarre, most alien.

Both believing and doubting are valuable skills. When you write the first draft of a paper you need to believe. When you edit the final draft you need to doubt.

### Separate Knowing in College

Many Wellesley students become skilled in separate knowing. They learn to doubt well. A junior, for example, told us she had finally hit upon a surefire formula for getting A's on her papers: "You take a point of view, and then you address the points of view that might successfully challenge yours. You try to disqualify those." Many students report feelings of real pride at their increased power in constructing solid arguments and interpretations. In some cases they begin to apply their new reasoning skills to issues outside academic life. For example:

I feel that (the procedures learned in courses) have helped me to look into my own life and try and analyze behavior rather than just react to it or ignore it... It's helped me to be more critical. My parents are having some marital difficulties. And I think before this time, like if it would have happened in high school, I would have just - I would have felt mad or helpless or frightened or something. And now I feel like I can think rationally about it and not just try and figure out who's right and who's wrong but to look at both sides of the story and see what sorts of factors are entering into the whole situation and causing the conflicts.

We assume that our readers, like ourselves, are aware of the benefits of dispassionate reasoning, and so we shall not dwell upon them. Rather, we shall consider some of the problems that students encounter in the course of acquiring skill in separate knowing.

The doubting game is an adversarial contest. Skill in this contest does not come easily to women. Here is Faith in her sophomore year:

The professor gave us his interpretation of Henry James' Turning (sic) of the Screw, and after it he said, "All right. This is my interpretation. You should be ripping it apart. You're sitting there. Come on, start ripping at it."



The interviewer asks, "Did you?" and Faith replies, "Well, I did a little, but basically I agreed with what he was saying." At the time of this interview, Faith had not yet learned how to play the doubting game. It does not matter whether you are inclined to agree with an interpretation or not; you must still try to find something wrong with it. In fact, the more believable the interpretation is, the harder you must try to doubt it.

Separate knowers use their skills in doubting to defend themselves against the authorities in their lives. As students, they use them to construct essays which they submit to authorities for evaluation in an attempt to demonstrate that they have mastered the requisite skills and so defend themselves against the teacher's doubts. Elbow says the doubting game involves "putting something on trial to see whether it is wanting or not" (p. 173). In her academic life the student sometimes comes to feel like a pawn in the doubting game. She, herself, is the "something" that is put on trial to see whether or not "it" is wanting. (And, as we shall see, even when she succeeds, when she is found not wanting, something may seem to her to be wanting.)

Separate knowers speak a public language. They exhibit their knowledge in a series of public performances. They address their messages not to themselves or to intimate friends but to an audience of relative strangers. Often, the primary purpose of their words is not to express personally meaningful ideas, but to manipulate the listener's reactions, and the listener is seen not as an ally in conversation but as a potentially hostile judge. Faith speaks proudly of having learned to "say what I mean," but she adds in the next breath, "You learn how to sound like you know what you're talking about, even if you don't."

We asked another student, Simone, what she thought the purpose of class discussion was. We meant, what did she get out of it, but she answered from the teacher's perspective: "It helps to see if the students are doing the reading. There's not much else to grade on." The purpose of "discussion," here, is to provide data which Authority can use for evaluation. It is not surprising that Simone rarely speaks in class. For separate knowers like Simone, Authority is pervasive. A Wellesley alumna in our sample told us that as an undergraduate she pictured God sitting on top of Green Hall tower with a movie camera, filming her every move.

Simone's professors force her to put words on paper. She complies, dutifully and even successfully, but her heart is not in it. "I write good papers when I try," she says, and we have no reason to doubt her. She is an able student, with a verbal SAT score of 780 and an A- grade point average. By "good papers" Simone means papers that teachers like. Simone, herself, does not like them much.

I can write a good paper, and someday I may learn to write one that I like, that is not just bullshit, but I still feel that it's somewhat pointless. I do it, and I get my grade, but it hasn't proved anything to me.



One reason Simone's heart is not in her papers is that she has mastered an important part of the separate knower's mode, being "objective." The separate knower achieves objectivity by taking as impersonal a stance as possible towards the object. Elbow says that in the doubting game you try to "extricate yourself." You try "to attack the problem of self-interest by weeding out the self, its wishes and its preoccupations." You try to "make your thinking more like using a computer,"... "the less involvement of the self the better" (pp. 171-172).

The separate knower's procedures are strictly impersonal. Feelings and personal beliefs are rigorously excluded. Faith, interviewed in her first and second years, articulated this position especially clearly. As a first-year student, Faith had learned that "you can't really analyze an event unless you divorce yourself from your emotions about it." In writing a paper about Wuthering Heights, she said,

The hardest thing to do was to separate my personal opinion of Heathcliff from the issue of whether or not Heathcliff was a fully-developed, rounded character.

When Faith first read the novel she just plain hated Heathcliff, but upon the third reading she could see how Bronte had developed the character, and this, she saw, was what the teacher wanted her to write about. He didn't care how she, personally, felt about Heathcliff as a person; he wanted her to explain how Heathcliff "worked" within the "system" of the novel.

Faith had begun to apply this mode of objective analysis outside the classroom to issues of world affairs. "For example," she said,

I personally am very appalled at the Iranians taking Americans hostage. However, when analyzing it, I can't say, "Well, that's awful because they're harming Americans, and I sympathize with the hostages." I have to say, "Well, this isn't really smart of the Ayatollah Khomeini to do this, because it causes world opinion against Iran," and so forth.

This is an extraordinary, although not atypical, statement. To be objective, here, means to exclude one's own concerns - indeed to exclude all values except for the enemy's self-interest. It means, also, to exclude all emotions, including the enemy's, examining the issue from a strictly pragmatic, strategic point of view. The Iranian crisis, like Wuthering Heights, is treated as a technical problem. Faith has surely succeeded in "weeding out the self."

Faith finds this game exhilarating. In dormitory discussions she had begun to try out different voices, "taking a stand that I really didn't agree with, just to be contrary." It makes her feel, she says, "like a separate, individual person" to put her old self aside and exercise her new powers of reason.



But, for others, selfless separate knowing ends not in exhilaration but in anomie and monotony. These students use mechanical or biological metaphors to describe their paper writing. Daphne loves reading English novels and she loves discussing them in class, perhaps because these activities allow her to engage in connected knowing, but writing papers feels like "just cranking" them out. Simone calls her papers bullshit because she doesn't care about what she is writing about, and reason, in the absence of feeling, "is shit." "The problem," Simone says,

is that I don't feel terribly strongly about one point of view, but that point of view seems to make more sense. It's easier to write the paper, supporting that point of view than the other one, because there's more to support it. And it's not one of my deep-founded beliefs, but it writes the paper.

Simone doesn't write the paper; "It" writes the paper. Reasons write the paper, and words and reasons seem unrelated to personal truth. Forced to choose between a personal belief she cannot reasonably articulate and a position she does not believe but can defend, she feels she must, if she is to survive, choose the reasonable "acceptable lie" (in Adrienne Rich's (1979, p. 28) chilling phrase).

#### Connected Knowing in College

While separate knowers are busy doubting and being doubted, connected knowers are trying to believe. Elbow calls the believing game "the dialectic of experience." In trying to understand an assertion, he says, you "try to have the experience of someone who made the assertion" (1973, p. 171), try to make sense of an idea by getting inside the head of its creator. Connected knowers value the kind of knowledge that comes from firsthand experience, and they want to enlarge their own knowledge by learning about other people's experiences. Here, for example, is a first-year student we call Natasha:

The other night I was having a wonderful conversation with someone from Ethiopia, which is communist. Ethiopia has only become communist in the last couple of years, and how did that come about? What is it about the people that accepted communism? Has it helped them or not helped them? It was great to get another view on it from someone who's right there in the situation and who can see it differently from the American view that communism is bad, although I still feel it is.

We have in our records many reports of conversations like this, especially among first-year students. These conversations differ in both form and substance from the dormitory "bull session," as usually described. These young women do not engage in metaphysical debate. They do not argue about abstractions or attack or define positions. No one tries to prove anything or to convert anyone. The Ethiopian tries to articulate her reality and Natasha tries to understand it. They do not discuss commun-



ism in general, impersonal terms but in terms of its origins and consequences among a particular group of real people.

When connected knowers ask about a person's "reasons" for her views, they are talking the logic of experience, not the logic of propositions. "Why do you think that?" they ask, meaning, not "What were the steps in your reasoning?" but "What circumstances led you to that perception?" The conversation is rather like a clinical interview. By inviting the respondent to tell her story, without interruption, the questioner allows the respondent to control her own response, to write her own story.

At early stages, players of the believing game focus upon the facts of each others' lives, but gradually the focus shifts to how the players construe the facts. The form, rather than the content of knowing, becomes central. The separate knower learns through explicit formal instruction how to adopt a different perspective - how, for example, to think like a sociologist. The connected knower learns through empathy, through second-hand-firsthand experience. As Faith says, "A deep relationship offers you a chance to really get to know another view of looking at the world." Her close friends, she says, "have very different ways of looking at things, and my knowing them very well has shown me other ways of seeing the world." Discussions with one of these close friends led Faith to an entirely new conception of the purpose of a college education. She had thought it was to prepare for a successful career, but she has come to believe that it is to expand her mind.

Conversations among intimates do not always concern such large issues as communism and higher education. More often they consist of what Patricia Spacks (1982) has called "small shared truth(s)" (p.24). Sometimes the women talk directly about their own feelings. Sometimes they talk about other people. The latter is commonly known as "gossip."

Spacks contrasts "gossip" with "discourse": "People discourse to one another; they gossip with. One discourses from a height, gossips around the kitchen table" (p. 24). Gossip concerns the personal, the particular and, frequently, the petty. It does not follow that gossip is a trivial activity, although many Wellesley students believe it is trivial and are ashamed of doing it. They ask for a larger faculty presence in their dormitories, hoping that it will raise the level of conversation from gossip to discourse. But gossiping should not be discouraged: to gossip well is to think well in the connected mode. The explicit information gossipers share concerns the behavior of other people, but, implicitly, gossipers tell each other about themselves, by showing how they interpret the information they share. In gossip, as Spacks says, "responses to news matter more than news itself" (p. 28). As the gossipier observes her friend's responses, she learns how the friend thinks.

Spacks says that gossip proceeds from trust and builds trust. This is true of all conversations conducted in the connected mode: these conversations grow out of connection, and they cement connections. The first rule



of the believing game, Elbow says, is to refrain from doubting.

Good friends meeting together over a long period of time for conversation illustrate the ideal condition for the practice of connected knowing. Trust is essential, since participants must share thoughts which are still fragmentary, illogical and poorly expressed. Participants must be able to make mistakes and change their minds without losing face. They are not presenting polished arguments and asking for criticism; they are offering half-baked half-truths and asking for nurture. Participants try to act as midwives to each other's thoughts. In such a group, you make public the slow and inelegant growth of your idea, and your comrades try to understand each inelegant version.

In such an ideal group mutual exchange occurs among the members. Each person spends time trying to understand the other and being understood by the other. You confirm the other person as her thinking develops and the other person confirms you as you struggle with your ideas. You need not prove your worth as a thinker, as the separate knower must. You are confirmed as you are.

But these groups are not static. The conversation is not merely cathartic or supportive. Members of the group construct new knowledge together. Eleanor Duckworth (1984) has been helping teachers of children to "pay attention to themselves as learners" (p. 1) by working together in groups on projects like observing the moon in its different phases. The "relationship among knowers" (p. 4) has turned out to be a powerful tool in each individual teacher's learning. One of the teachers, Paula Wellman, wrote about her experience in the group as follows:

My own theory of learning was once, I believe, that either you know or don't know - you cross a magical line to knowing without a knowable way of how that crossing was done. Now I would say that by taking another's point of view you can see that all physical phenomena exist in relation to a point of view. When Marue taught us how to see Mary Ellen's moon (that is, Marue was able to understand Mary Ellen's generalization, and to relate it to another seemingly contradictory one) it was as exciting as when I saw revolutions in my own learning. To stop and see another's meaning enhances your meaning and makes you hopeful about knowing even more. It is an opening up, not a closing; not a patient respect but the essence of knowing (p. 4).

Most of the connected knowing groups which Wellesley women told us about consist of their friends and lovers, and their mothers, sisters and grandmothers, but a few women mentioned instances of connected knowing in the classroom. A sophomore, for example, is enjoying class discussion of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein:



You can just read it on the top for the story. Then you can get underneath into Mary Shelley's life and all the hidden parts, and some people see some parts more than others, and they can explain them to you and show them to you.

Another sophomore - we call her Bess - told us about a studio art course in which teacher and students played the believing game. "Everyone is scared," she says, and no one wants to "cut up" (rip into?) anyone's work. As the class goes along, she says, although people "get more and more supportive," they also get more and more critical.

But if you've gone along since the beginning with the same people it never comes across as this awful criticism. It's very supportive...You have to stand there and face something for four hours and know that you didn't solve anything. You're emotionally drained when you're finished. Then, the next day, people help you decide why, or say, "No, I think it came out all right. Don't be so upset," or "This is fantastic." You just keep picking each other up out of the pits, and saying, "You've done something good here," or "Why don't you try this?" (The teacher) is more or less a conductor. He shouldn't dominate it. It's never just a grade scrawled across the top; it's a suggestion. This one professor always found something right with your painting. When you were about ready to chuck it, he always said, "No, look what you've done." That's really important.

People can criticize each other's work in this class and accept each other's criticisms, because members of the group have shared the same experience. This is the only sort of expertise the connected knower recognizes, the only sort of criticism she can accept. Authority in connected knowing rests not on power or status or certification but on commonality of experience. Bess says that she would be in a better position than the interviewer to evaluate a sculpture produced by a classmate.

Because I went through the same experience. I did the same thing. I did the work at the same rate and time as my fellow students. I understood the assignment. I knew what we were searching for. I knew that the problem was to use one piece of wood. We had to use the whole piece of wood in a sculpture. I knew how hard that was. I knew how the wood warped. It wasn't good wood. I knew that we didn't have much time, so most of them weren't finished. If you walked in there, you're not going to understand why it's that awful piece of wood. Physically, it's a gross piece of wood that's warped and has knots. You're not going to understand why it seems like this amount, why it's not bigger or smaller. Even though you have a right to your opinion, I'm in a better place to give one, because I know more facts about the situation.



Here is Bess again, telling us this time about an English class. Usually the teacher conducts the class as a straight lecture. Bess says, just hands you his thoughts." On one memorable occasion, however, he allowed a discussion to erupt:

We were all raising our hands and talking about I forget what book, and some of the students brought up things that he hadn't thought about that made him see it in a whole different way, and he was really excited, and we all came to a conclusion that none of us had started out with. We came up with an answer to a question we thought was unanswerable in the beginning, and it just made you all feel really good when you walked out of class. You felt you had accomplished something and that you understood the book. And he was pleased, too.

But in subsequent classes, the teacher returned to his podium. "I guess," Bess said, "he doesn't like that method."

But it is not merely a question of "what teachers like." Even teachers who would like to promote connected knowing - ourselves included - are not trained to do so and do not know how to do it. We suspect that therapists know better than academicians. We have found the work presented in this Stone Center series helpful in our thinking about connected knowing, in particular the Jordan Surrey and Kaplan paper (1983) on empathy and Alexandra Kaplan's paper (1983) on therapy. However, if teachers were more skilled at promoting connected knowing and playing the believing game, they would find it difficult to conduct connected knowing classes under the conditions which prevail in most colleges, although conditions may be more favorable in some colleges than in others.

One of the women we interviewed in another study had spent two years in a very small college where most of the classes were conducted as seminars. She then transferred to a large college, where she enrolled in a seminar on Faulkner, one of her favorite topics. "It was awful. The people didn't know how to talk about anything. They didn't know how to share ideas. It was always an argument; it wasn't an idea to be developed, to be explored." Seminars at the smaller college had had some of the same problems. Students had rambled down irrelevant paths, spoke incoherently, interrupted and so on, but the students had come to reveal their own foibles and to know their classmates' quirks and how to work around them. The students in the small college knew each other well enough to avoid unnecessary conflicts and confront important issues. "It was like a family group trying to work out a family problem, except it was an idea."

Many Wellesley students are predisposed toward believing and supporting and they are skilled in some aspects of connected knowing, but they have not yet mastered the fully developed form of connected knowing. In their effort to understand the situation through the other person's eyes, Wellesley students believe they must obliterate themselves. They are well aware of the dangers of projection in "the bad sense," as Elbow calls it, and they go to great lengths to avoid reading their own motives into other people. But they don't seem to



have developed methods to help them use their own experiences to understand other people's experiences. And that is what you must do to practice connected knowing in its most mature form. For instance, when you try to understand another person's experience and feelings, you think of similar experiences and feelings or of analogous situations that you've been in.

Wellesley students seem to have learned to ignore their own experiences in the effort to understand. Instead of using themselves, they extricate themselves, to use Elbow's term. And this makes it hard for them to enter the other person's perspective. In her first year, for example, Faith saw what her history professor wanted her to do, but she could not see how to do it.

He's trying to get us to divorce ourselves from modern ways of thinking and look at it as it was, say in 1700, when the event occurred. Which is fine. But I have difficulty doing that, because I can't place myself back in the proper time period. I come from a middle-class family, and back then you would either have been peasantry or aristocracy. And I can't imagine being either. Now that we've gotten into the late 1800s I'm doing a little better, I think.

She doesn't know how to find something in her experience which can connect her with the experience of an eighteenth century peasant.

On the rare occasions when our students do describe using their own experience to help understand the other's situation, it is usually in the context of helping a friend solve a personal problem. They are then sometimes able to find analogies and metaphors in their own experience and feelings to help them understand the friend's dilemma.

Elbow warns that it takes practice to get a feel for the self and to use the self as an instrument for thinking. A disturbingly high proportion of the women we have interviewed report having little sense of self. An alumna in our sample says

It's hard for me to know how I feel. I can rarely say honestly whether I like this or I don't like that, because I'm always trying to second-guess myself...I look forward to being fifty years old. I really do. I would like to be somebody who knew what she wanted, who could say I don't like this and I do like that...Most of my life has been spent in pleasing other people or in devising stratagems through which I could appear to have pleased them and fulfilled my obligations to everybody else but myself. One did one's best to oblige.

Both the separate knowers and the more connected knowers have paid such close attention to the expectations of others that they have neglected themselves. Both feel their lives have been governed by external expectations, the more separate knowers by the expectations of institutions (doing what Authority wants), the more connected knowers by the expectations of the other person in personal relationships.



The more separate knowers convey the absence of a sense of the self by describing themselves in mechanical terms: "I'm a poorly wired computer." The more connected say things like "I would fall into relationships and just kind of subsume myself in what that person expected. I never developed a sense of who I was and what I needed." Jean Baker Miller's (1976) words apply to both groups:

Women have been so encouraged to concentrate on the emotions and reactions of others that they have been diverted from examining and expressing their own emotions. While this is very understandable, given the past situation, women have not yet applied this highly developed faculty to exploring and knowing themselves (p. 39).

We must devise ways to teach women the skills of separate knowing, the skills of disinterested reason, without turning them into machines. And we must find ways to help women "explore and know themselves" so that they can use themselves as instruments in connected knowing. When women feel constantly judged by God with His movie camera, they cannot learn the skills of connected knowing, and they often feel like robots when they use their separate knowing skills. We believe that, in a collegial atmosphere where faculty and students shared responsibility for setting goals and assessing progress, connected knowing would be fostered and separate knowing would not suffer.

#### NOTES

1. Many of the ideas presented in this paper were developed in collaboration with Mary Field Belenky, Nancy Goldberger and Jill Mattuck Tarule, and some of the material will appear in Belenky, M., Clinchy, B., Goldberger, N., and Tarule, J., The other side of silence: Women's ways of knowing, to be published by Basic Books in 1986.
2. We wish to thank the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, U. S. Department of Education, the Spencer Foundation and Wellesley College for supporting the research on which this paper is based.



## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

After each colloquium lecture, a discussion is held. Selected portions are summarized here.

Question: Do you think we could say explicitly to students, when they enter college, "Look, there are systems of 'objective' knowing. They have certain values, and they've been developed in various disciplines, and it is good to learn these. But this is not the only way of knowing."?

Clinchy: I think you'd have to really respect and value the connected mode. It's not enough just to say there is another way.

Zimmerman: Maybe the most important question is, if you agree that both skills are valuable, what kind of an environment would you create to try to promote both? And then one question is, would you be more likely to get both skills developed if you had an environment that emphasized separate thinking and doubting and you try within that environment to encourage small nuclei of connected knowing? Or, on the other hand, would you be more likely to get both modes developed if you had an environment that stressed connected knowing and believing and then, within that, you said, "Okay. But for some purposes it's important to know how to play the doubting game. It's important to know how to be a separate knower." My own intuition on this is that the latter would promote both modes of knowing more than the former would, at least for women. If the predominant culture is a doubting culture, how much believing can go on? If, for example, the person who is leading the discussion is grading you on how well you discuss, it becomes difficult to engage in connected discussion.

Elbow talks about two kinds of college classes. One he calls a "movie class" in which there's a show that's on for thirteen weeks and students come and go and the show goes on, one time after another, and that's the way it's run. The other one he calls a "yogurt class," and he says in that kind of class you begin with the nub of the yogurt. You get the starter going in a group of people. And then that group of people have to keep meeting and trusting and discussing and what may happen is that the content may differ very much over any three-month period. The content may be changing a lot, but it's not a show that is filmed ahead of time; the content grows out of this trusting group.

Clinchy: In the yogurt class you could engage in separate knowing, I think, without annihilating the self. You could engage in a form of separate knowing that is disinterested but not uninterested. If you can do separate knowing in a playful kind of way, then the self is still there. It's when it becomes this deadly earnest business that real suppression of the self occurs, and the costs become so high.



Question: I know that connected thinking is more, for me, natural and productive of generating new ideas, and I use separate knowing in putting out ideas into a hostile environment. But I was wondering if any of the students you interviewed seemed to have integrated the two modes.

Clinchy: Not as many as we would like. Many students use both modes, but they don't really integrate them; they compartmentalize them. They say things like, "When I'm with my friends, I believe. When I'm in class, I doubt." I remember one student said that it was not until she read Carol Gilligan that she realized that the kind of thinking she was doing with her friends was real thinking.

Question: As a psychologist, I wonder if you can address the issue of how you incorporate connected thinking into science teaching, where we try to stress objective scientific methods.

Clinchy: Well, as you know, there is considerable debate within psychology, within all the social sciences now, about whether self-extrication is the only appropriate definition of objectivity, or even the most appropriate definition for objectivity - whether it is appropriate in psychology to use a form of objectivity borrowed from physics. Some people believe that it is legitimate to talk about science in the connected mode. We've been interested in attempts to teach science where you try to bring the student more into the process of the scientist, as we do in the research methods in psychology, by requiring students to do their own experiments so that they can have the experience of doing research rather than simply reading about it.

Zimmerman: I think in most colleges the introductory sciences are certainly taught in what we would call a separate knowing mode, and that doubting is certainly emphasized. Whether that has to be so is another question. A man named Hermann Epstein has described an innovative way of teaching science in which the aim right from the beginning, and perhaps especially in the beginning course, is to try to get inside the head of the scientist. You're not trying to doubt him or second-guess him. You're trying to understand what in the world is this person doing, and why is this person doing it, and if you were the scientist, what would your next step in research be? That is a more connected introduction to science.

Question: I was thinking, too, as you were talking about especially the last chapter of Evelyn Keller's book on Barbara McClintock. (General chorus of agreement.) It's as if Barbara McClintock, who certainly knew how to be a scientist in the usual way, had internalized this connected mode. She speaks about getting into those cells under the microscope and into each kernel of corn she's studying. I think many scientists do that without enunciating that that's what they do.

Clinchy: But I have to admit that in teaching research methods I really do stress the separate mode. For example, we do inter-rater reliability where the two raters go off to different rooms and have no communication and score



everything blind and then come back and we figure the per cent of agreement. We teach people how to do that, but I at least don't spend any time teaching students how you arrive to begin with at the coding you're using. I mean actually, when you think of it, you know, we all know that in doing collaborative work in science there's all kinds of connected stuff going on. There's all kinds of ways of entering each other's experience, and constructing knowledge together that we really don't, that I at least, don't teach my students at all. I don't think they get that flavor of science at all. So that I feel like I'm teaching only part of science. I'm teaching the separate knowing part of science. But it's not that the other doesn't exist. It's that I don't teach it. And that's partly 'cause I don't know how and because it's so slow. It takes so long.

Question: We really don't learn how to think systematically about ourselves or about our own experience. There's this incredible dichotomy. If it's external, it's objective and it's logical; if it's internal, it's subjective and it's biased. And I think for learning to really occur, it helps to start with your own experience. Consider a topic like intimacy. We usually don't begin thinking about a topic like that by thinking about our own intimate relationships. Although personal experience is a rich source, our fear is that we won't get beyond that. We won't be able to move.

Zimmerman: You remind me of the search-research groups at the Stone Center. It's the same notion of involving the self in a legitimate, researchable topic...The search is an inner search in connection with others, and it is then systematically explored outside the self. But it's interesting. The search-research groups are noncredit. If they were graded, would it work? Would it happen?



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